

Helena Trolley Restoration Project 2002-2010

Statement to the Committee from the Helena/Lewis & Clark County Historic Preservation Commission

The following points are emphasized:

1: The grant match has changed since our submission. We (Capital High School) has received \$10,000 in cash match from General Mills in the form of a "My Hometown Helper" grant. This was received in January. The grant is slated to be spent on recording the trolley with sophisticated digital scanning imagery. These are highly detailed digital images that produce to-scale drawings of the car. Grant funds will also be used to purchase materials for restoring the car. These are wood and epoxy. This alters our matching source and strengthens our application considerably.

2: Our application stressed community involvement in the project. We have exciting news about that. We are now in partnership with Capital High School and will use the trolley as an Interactive Teaching Artifact. That means the trolley will be studied, researched, restored and interpreted by students at Capital High School in Helena. This unique and important method of introducing secondary school students to history by examining and working with an inspiring and significant historic object like the trolley is probably why the General Mills grant was the largest one given any community in the nation so far.

At Capital High, students in the woodworking shop are already assigned the task of reproducing the cherry wood windows in the trolley. Once this class has completed that work, next year's class will take over with another part of the project. There is no deadline for the restoration of the trolley - in fact, the longer it takes, the more students will be able to participate in this wonderful way to learn. But woodworking is not the only exercise involved. Honor students have signed on to conduct historic research on the trolley to learn more about mass transportation and the old Helena Trolley System. Art teachers have expressed an interest in using trolley themes in their classes. The photography class has already started photographing the trolley both to study aspects of photographic work and to record the progress of the project. And the business class at Capital High will be keeping the books for the project. They already have bills ready to pay and a budget to pay them from. Nonetheless, this continues to be a community project - volunteers have dedicated many hours to helping store the trolley and prepare it for restoration. They will continue to be part of the project.

3: Our application showed an excess of \$1000. We had difficulty projecting costs and sources of match at the time. The General Mills grant has given us a boost that will help further fund raising and guarantees immediate action. As said before, our budget is thereby strengthened.

4: Once restored the trolley will be placed on public display. This is currently identified as being a spot in downtown Helena. You can appreciate that as the project continues over the next 4 to 6 years the location of the trolley display may be changed. It is our Historic Preservation Commission's ambition to create a county agricultural and industrial museum. Several projects similar to the trolley restoration may be underway by the end of the decade. If so, the trolley may become part of that effort.

The Helena / Lewis and Clark County Historic Preservation Commission certainly appreciates this opportunity to update the Committee on our trolley restoration project.

On Behalf of The Commission: RAYMOND K. READ, Vice Chairman